DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 429 JC 850 205

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TITLE Follow-Up Survey of Students Who Received a Degree or Certificate from Napa Valley College in the 1983-1984 Academic Year.
INSTITUTION Napa Valley Coll., Napa, CA.
PUB DATE 18 Mar 85
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Graduates; *College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; *Employment Patterns; Followup Studies; Graduate Surveys; Two Year Colleges; Vocational Followup

ABSTRACT

In winter 1983, a survey of Napa Valley College (NVC) graduates was conducted to determine the percentage of 1983-84 graduates who achieved their goal by the time they left NVC; graduate satisfaction with instructional quality and with the overall quality of NVC; graduate satisfaction with employment or transfer preparation; employment patterns; and salaries. Each of the 191 students who received a degree or certificate from NVC during 1983-84 and for whom addresses were available were mailed a questionnaire. Study findings, based on a 61% response rate, included the following. (1) 94% of the graduates were either employed (57%) or attending college (37%); (2) 46% of the respondents had originally attended NVC to prepare for immediate entry into a career, while 32% had attended to prepare for transfer to a four-year college; (3) 86% of the graduates felt that their primary educational goal had been achieved; (4) of those degree recipients who did not feel that their educational objectives had been achieved, 45% reported that they needed additional courses to pursue a new career or academic interest; and (5) 87% of the transfer students remained in a field at least somewhat related to their NVC major, with 75% of the transfer students indicating that they were satisfied with their preparation. Recommendations for strengthening the educational programs and services of the college are included. (AYC)

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FOLLOW-UP SURVEY OF STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED A DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE FROM NAPA VALLEY COLLEGE IN THE 1983-1984 ACADEMIC YEAR

by

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JC 850 205

A Project of NAPA VALLEY COLLEGE

March 18, 1985

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY OF STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED A DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE FROM NAPA VALLEY COLLEGE IN THE 1983-1984 ACADEMIC YEAR

In winter 1983, a survey was conducted of Napa Valley College graduates who completed a degree or certificate program in the 1983-1984 academic year. The purpose of this study was to obtain answers to each of the following questions:

- What percentage of the 1983-1984 graduates achieved their educational goal by the time they left Napa Valley College?
- How satisfied were the graduates with the quality of classroom instruction they received in their program of study? How satisfied were the former students with the overall quality of Napa Valley College?
- How satisfied were the 1983-1984 graduates with the preparation for employment they received at Napa Valley College?
- What positions do graduates of various programs enter?
- What salaries do graduates of Napa Valley College command in their first year of post-college employment?
- How satisfied were the graduates who transferred to a four-year institution with the academic preparation they received at Napa Valley College?

METHOD

Names and addresses were available for 391 students who received a degree or certificate from Napa Valley College during the 1983-1984 academic year. In November, 1984, each of these graduates was sent a three-page survey and a cover letter explaining the project. Graduates who didn't return the survey received a postcard in December and a letter in January encouraging them to complete the questionnaire. These follow-up procedures increased the response rate to a very respectable 61 percent rate of return (238 out of 391).

RESULTS

What Was the Educational and Occupational Status of the Graduates at the Time They Completed the Survey? Ninety-four percent of the graduates were either employed (57%) or were attending college (37%). The remaining six percent of the former students were either not employed and were seeking a job (2%), had full-time home responsibilities (2%), were in active military service (1%), or were retired (1%).

What Was the Primary Reason the Graduates Had for Attending Napa Valley College? The graduates were asked to indicate the primary reason they had for enrolling at Napa Valley College. As shown in Table 1, the two most common reasons these individuals had for attending Napa Valley College were to prepare for immediate entry into a career (46%) and to prepare for transfer to a four-year college (32%). It is interesting to note that most of the degree recipients who initially enrolled at the college for reasons of personal interest and self-enrichment were either employed full-time or were attending a four-year college or university.

TABLE 1

Check the One Statement Which Most Closely Corresponds to the Primary Reason You Had for Attending Napa Valley College

Prepare for Immediate Entry into a Career	46%
Prepare for Transfer to a Four-Year College	32%
Interest and Self-Enrichment	10%
Update Skills for a Job Currently Held	7%
Other	5%

What Percentage of the Graduates Reported that Their Primary Goal for Attending Napa Valley College Was Achieved? Eighty-six percent of the graduates indicated that they had achieved their major educational goal by the time they left Napa Valley College. The remaining 14 percent of the degree recipients didn't feel they had achieved their primary educational goal upon graduating from the college.

Reasons Given by Degree Recipients on Why Their Educational Objective Was Not Achieved. Of those degree recipients who didn't feel they had achieved their educational goal upon graduating from Napa Valley College, 61 percent gave reasons that were largely beyond the college's control. More specifically, 45 percent reported that they needed additional courses to pursue a new career or academic interest, which differed from the area in which they had received their degree or certificate. Most of these individuals were continuing to take courses at Napa Valley College. An additional 16 percent of the graduates in this group noted that they needed a bachelor's degree to achieve their educational goal.

Other reasons cited by the graduates for not having achieved their educational goals at the college included loss of credit upon transferring to a four-year university and lack of success in finding a job in their field of study.

How Satisfied Were the Graduates with the Quality of Instruction in Their Program of Study and with the Overall Quality of Educational Programs Provided at Napa Valley College? As illustrated in Table 2, 87 percent of

the degree recipients reported that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of instruction they received in their program of study at the college, and 83 percent noted that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of education provided at Napa Valley College. At the other end of the rating scale continuum, three percent of the former students indicated that they were not satisfied with the quality of classroom instruction in their program of study, and just four percent of the graduates were not satisfied with the overall quality of education provided at Napa Valley College.

TABLE 2

Satisfaction of Graduates with the Quality of Instruction
They Received while Attending Napa Valley College

	How Satisfied Were You with the Quality of Classroom Instruction in Your Program of Study?	How Satisfied Were You with the Overall Quality of Education at NVC?
Very Satisfied	47%	30%
Satisfied	40%	53%
Somewhat Satisfied	9%	13%
Not Very Satisfied	1%	3%
Unsatisfied	2%	1%

How Satisfied Were the Graduates with the Quality of Student Services at Napa Valley College? Eighty-nine percent of those who received a degree or certificate from the college in 1983-1984 noted that they were either very satisfied (19%), satisfied (56%), or somewhat satisfied (14%) with the quality of student services at Napa Valley College. Just over one in ten of the graduates were either not very satisfied (9%) or unsatisfied (2%) with the quality of student services. In most instances, the graduates who were not entirely satisfied with the college's student services expressed a need for increased and more accurate academic advisement, particularly for those interested in transferring to a four-year college or university.

What Is the Relationship between Graduates' Program of Study at Napa Valley College and Their Major Field at the University in which They Enrolled? One third of the former students who completed the survey were enrolled in a four-year college or university. When asked to indicate the extent to which their major program of study at Napa Valley College was related to their major field at the transfer institution, 48 percent reported that it was directly related, 39 percent indicated that it was somewhat related, and 14 percent noted that it was not related. Information on the transfer students' major field of study at Napa Valley College, the university major,

and the institution that they are attending can be obtained in the Office of Instruction and Student Services.

How Satisfied Were the Graduates with Their Preparation for Transfer to the University They Are Currently Attending? Three-fourths of the graduates who were attending a four-year institution stated that they were either very satisfied (21%) or satisfied (54%) with the preparation for transfer they received at Napa Valley College. An additional 13 percent of degree recipients were somewhat satisfied with their preparation for transfer.

All of the respondents to the survey who transferred reported that they earned a grade point average of "C" or better at the four-year college or university that they were attending. Sixty-two percent of the graduates reported that their grade point average at the institution they were attending was a "B" or higher.

Although each of the former students who responded to the survey was doing well in his/her upper-division studies, 12 percent expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with the preparation for transfer they received at Napa Valley College. In most instances, the former students' dissatisfaction stemmed from their belief that they didn't receive adequate and/or accurate information on the courses they needed to take at Napa Valley College to fulfill the lower-division requirements of the university to which they transferred.

What Percentage of the Graduates Had All of Their Credits Earned at Napa Valley College Accepted by the Universities to Which They Transferred? Eight in ten of the graduates who transferred to a four-year college or university reported that all of the credits they earned at Napa Valley College were accepted by the university they were attending. Of those transfer students who didn't have all of their credits accepted, 65 percent lost seven or more credits. Inspection of transcripts of those former students whose transfer institution didn't accept ten or more units revealed that these indidivuals had taken more courses than were needed to fulfill a particular general education and/or major field requirement of the institution to which they transferred.

What is the Relationship between the Graduates' Current Jobs and Their Programs of Study at Napa Valley College? Eight in ten of the 1983-1984 graduates who were working full time held a job that was directly related to their program of study at Napa Valley College. The remaining 20 percent of the former students reported that their job was not directly related to their major field of study at the college. When asked to indicate why this was so, the graduates cited the following reasons: could not find a job in the field of college preparation (28%); program of study at Napa Valley College was not career-related (26%); better pay in field in which I am employed (23%); did not want to work in my field of preparation (14%); and there were better opportunities for advancement in the field in which I am employed (9%).

What Are the Job Titles, Salaries, and Places of Employment of the 1983-1984 Napa Valley College Graduates? Respondents to the follow-up survey were asked to state their job titles, names of businesses in which they were employed, and their annual salaries (not including overtime). The average annual salary commanded by the graduates employed full-time was $19,599. The average salary of graduates by college program area was as follows: Administration of Justice $22,133; Telecommunications $22,109; Electronics $21,395; Business $21,173; Associate Degree Nursing $21,098; Psychiatric Technician $16,684; Drafting $16,500; Licensed Vocational Nurse $15,340; Secretarial Science $14,165; and Early Childhood Education $14,110.

A list of the graduates' job titles, salaries, and location of employers by their major field of study at Napa Valley College is available upon request from the Office of Instruction and Student Services.

How Satisfied Were the Graduates with Their Preparation for Employment? Eighty-nine percent of the graduates who went to work after they graduated noted that they were either very satisfied (33%), satisfied (47%), or somewhat satisfied (9%) with the preparation for employment they received at Napa Valley College. Former students who were not entirely satisfied with their community college preparation for employment included those who were unemployed and seeking work; graduates of programs that were not career-oriented (e.g., social science, liberal arts, and humanities majors); and graduates of programs in which a baccalaureate degree or higher is often required by employers (e.g., engineering, computer studies, and accounting).

Comments and Suggestions Offered by the Graduates. The last question on the survey was an open-ended item which stated, "What changes, if any, would you recommend be made to the occupational or transfer program in which you were enrolled at Napa Valley College?" Although this open-ended question invited constructive criticism and suggestions, 43 of the graduates wrote in comments which praised a particular program or thanked a particular faculty member or counselor at the college. An additional 18 of the graduates noted that no change was needed.

Twenty-three of the graduates noted that the degree program in which they were enrolled at the college could be improved by providing better counseling and academic advisement, particularly for those students interested in transferring to a four-year college or university. Other comments offered by the alumni on how their major program of study at the college could be improved included the need for greater cohesiveness among the nursing faculty, the desire to expand the number of course offerings in certain program areas, and the call for more advanced equipment in a few of the occupational program areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are four major recommendations stemming from this study on how the college can strengthen the educational programs and services provided to students. Three of the four recommendations focus on the need to provide increased academic advisement, particularly to individuals interested in transferring to a four-year college or university. Graduates who called for better academic counseling and advisement could be placed into one of the following categories: those who didn't have all of their credits accepted by the transfer institution; graduates who found that they had not satisfied all of the lower-division requirements of the university to which they transferred; and degree recipients who desired greater direction in their academic and career planning during their stay at the college.

Recommendation One. Strong consideration should be given to requiring individual academic advisement sessions to all degree-oriented students.

Recommendation Two. Up-to-date and accurate information on courses needed to fulfill the lower-division requirements of four-year colleges and universities should be available to students in the Transfer Center.

Recommendation Three. Students who are interested in continuing their education at a four-year college or university should be provided with a special training session on how to use the resources available in the Transfer Center. Part of the training session should be devoted to informing students that, while trained college staff members are available to assist them, the ultimate responsibility for keeping informed of transfer institution requirements rests with the student.

Recommendation Four. Program coordinators of occupational programs should consider developing procedures for staying in contact with graduates of their programs. Many of the college's graduates are gaining excellent entry-level jobs with well known companies. Staying in contact with the alumni will help the college develop closer ties with industry, and it will provide program coordinators with an excellent source of information about developments in their industries, job opportunities for their graduates, and support for their programs. Two methods of keeping in contact with graduates are to provide alumni with yearly newsletters highlighting college and program developments and to invite the alumni to the college once a year to attend a special event.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate the Napa Valley College is doing an excellent job in serving the educational needs of its students. Most of the students who graduated from Napa Valley College in 1983-1984 were satisfied with all aspects of the educational and student service programs at the college. The graduates were satisfied with the quality of

instruction they received in their major programs of study and gave high ratings to the overall quality of education provided at the college. Most of the degree recipients who continued their education at a four-year institution were satisfied with their preparation for transfer. Nearly all of the graduates who entered the labor market were satisfied with the preparation for employment they received at the college, and most of these individuals gained employment in jobs with a starting salary that was in excess of $19,000 per year.

These results were very similar to those obtained in the follow-up survey of students who graduated from the college in 1982-1983. The positive evaluations of the college given by the alumni are consistent with the favorable ratings received in the fall 1984 surveys of current students and community members.

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JUN 21 1985